

The Sextant

The Literary Magazine of
Hodges University
2008

As the official literary magazine of Hodges University, *The Sextant* is devoted to creating a forum for students to express themselves through writing. The publication's mission is to foster student exploration of themes common to all peoples. The practical application of knowledge gained through career programs is emphasized at HU; however, we also recognize that an academic community is built through cultivating student activity that occurs beyond the classroom. Students wishing to submit poetry, short stories, essays, dramatic compositions, photographs and artwork are encouraged to send their works to Dr. Wesley Boozer at wboozer@hodges.edu.

The Sextant 2008 Editorial Committee

Faculty Editor	Dr. Wesley Boozer
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Editor's Note

Hodges University is a vibrant place—alive with personal growth and professional development. It seems fitting, then, that human growth and development is the theme of our 2008 Sextant. Beginning with three poems and a personal narrative about early childhood, our writers take you on a journey through adolescence and adulthood, ending fittingly with a selection of pieces about maturity and love.

As our student body here at Hodges University is enriched by its diversity, so too is our 2008 Sextant. From student-writers in their late teens to those well into adulthood, we encompass a myriad of experiences and perspectives. And while our pieces are about our *own* growth and development, we hope that by sharing them, we might add something to yours, too.

So turn the page, and join us as we share our stories and grow together.

Wesley Boozer, Ph.D.

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Early Childhood

Keri Squittieri has lived in Naples for fifteen years and has two children, Harley and Rocco, with her husband, Jim. Pursuing a bachelors degree in Health Studies with a minor in Psychology, Keri hopes to matriculate into the 2009 Physician Assistant Program at Nova Southeastern University. This poem was inspired by the birth of her son.

The needle in my back hurt at first,
But now I realize I have been through the worst.
The feeling of Euphoria is now taking over me;
I'm as relaxed and comfortable as I possibly can be.
The nurses say it's time to call the doctor and send everyone out,
For I'm just moments away from experiencing what life's all about.
As the doctor makes his entrance, I can see the bright light.
He says, "you'll be nestling your new baby as soon as tonight."
Daddy held my hand and coached me along.
I was so nervous; I wanted nothing to go wrong.
Moments later, I was tired and out of breath, but filled with joy
As the doctor said, "say hello to your new baby boy."
I'll never forget holding you for the first time in my arms
--Rocking you, cradling you, protecting you from harm.
Mommy loves you, don't ever forget.
And I'll always remember the first time we met.

Jessica Rodriguez is pursuing an associates degree in Criminal Justice. She writes, "I am married and have four beautiful and wonderful daughters who were the inspiration for this poem."

She Sleeps

I have never seen a more beautiful child,
ever in my day or my dreams run wild.
Her eyes close, lips parted,
her sweet little voice so highly regarded.
The moonlight on her face
--this is my favorite place.
Her breath so deep
--I watch her sleep.



*In addition to working and attending Hodges University full time, **Rich Miller** runs the youth group at his church and is currently studying to be an ordained minister. Of his passion for writing, Rich writes, "I have been writing for quite some time now, and I think that my writing is really starting to mature and take on a more honest but at the same time selective feel. Before I just wrote whatever came to mind; now I can write with a purpose. I seem to be able to say things when I write that I just can't find the words for when I try to speak."*

The Crutch

He's a little boy.

He uses a crutch to get around.

From time to time,

The little boy falls down.

With no one to help him up,

He must make it on his own.

Dinner's almost ready,

And he better hurry home.

His parents both adore him.

--The only son they have.

His sister always helps him,

Even when he makes her mad.

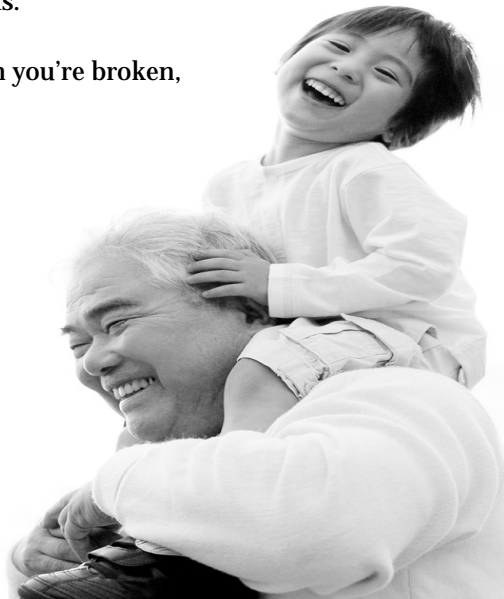
In spite of all his troubles,

He finds ways to smile.

And he'll brighten up your day

If you sit with him a while.

His joy is quite contagious,
And you cannot help but laugh
When he tells of his adventures;
He's always doing that.
He will grow up some day,
And have sons and daughters of his own.
"They'll need no crutch," he'll say.
"And they'll always make it home."
They'll have their heart's desire,
For to give it would be his.
The ability to smile when you're broken,
That's what freedom is.



Dale Martin grew up in Rochester, New York, where the winters were often cold and snowy. Of her story, she writes, “I speak about a very fun and pleasant memory that was shared in my childhood. Just writing about it brought back smiles and good feelings. Sometimes when we get lost in our own hectic schedules, our days are eased by the simple act of picking up a pen and piece of paper. I find relief by writing down my stories or thoughts and find it helpful to break things up in my life and only worry about those things that need to be worried about. I hope that the story makes you smile and possibly puts you back in time to a favorite childhood memory.”

A Perfect Winter Day

It was January, the holidays were over, and we were still on holiday break. We awoke to freshly fallen snow. There must have been at least two feet of new snow on the ground. My father was out snow-blowing the driveway, and my mother was making breakfast. The smell of pancakes and bacon filled the house.

After eating our breakfast, we begged our mother to let us go outside to play. We ran in to the foyer and grabbed our gear. On went the hats, gloves, scarves, and snow suits. Once we were dressed, we needed Mom to help us with our boots. One by one, on went the left boot--on went the right boot.

“Come on Mom, hurry up.” We were impatient children. My brother ran to the back door--then my sister, and finally it was me.

We all stood at the back door waiting for the okay to open the door, so we could rush out to play. We all looked like the Pillsbury doughboy. Our snowsuits made us appear to be 20 pounds heavier. Our scarves wrapped over our mouths and noses. All of us just stood there, sweating from the heat of the house and the adrenaline of going outside to play. Finally, my mother said we could go.

I turned the doorknob and stepped back to open the door. My sister and brother rushed forward and stopped abruptly. The bitter cold breeze smacked them in the face, took their breath away, and stopped them cold in their tracks.

“Burr! It is cold out there.” None of us cared, we just wanted to play.

My brother and sister ran out in to the garage, and out in to the driveway. I, on the other hand, ran toward the back door to go out in to the backyard. I stopped in the doorway, just before I stepped down in to the snow covered yard. It was beautiful. It was smooth and perfect. You could see the ripples where the wind blew the snow across the top of the packed snow. It looked as though there were a million diamonds dancing in our yard. It was such a sight--perfect in a way that is indescribable, winter in its glory.

All of a sudden I felt something or someone ram in to my back. Out the back door I went and face first in to the kneecap-high snow. After that all I heard was laughter and the crumpling of the snow from our boots.

Whoosh, whoosh.

“What was that?” I exclaimed. I looked up just in time to duck out of the way from a flying snow ball. I screamed, “Snowball fight.” Snowballs were flying left and right.

Whap, whap.

“Ouch!”...hit me square in the chest; my sister had a good arm. The three of us were running around, chasing each other... shooting snowballs at each other. All of a sudden, there were extra snowballs coming at us.

“Oh, no!” The neighborhood kids came to get my brother to play. I ran in to the garage to hide because I knew what they were about to do. Over the fence they came, pelting my brother and sister with snowballs.

My brother left, and my sister and I decided to make an igloo. I ran through the garage to retrieve our old Lego bins and a shovel. We cleared this perfect area in our backyard. It was tucked between the kitchen sliding door and the garage. I filled our bins with snow and packed it down as hard as I could. My sister would plop them on to the cleared ground for our foundation.

We must have spent hours out there making our igloo. After a while my father came out to check on us. We thought by the look on his face that we were in trouble, but he looked at us and commented on our good construction. He told us that if we put water on our igloo, it would freeze and make it stronger, but that we had to apply it correctly. So my sister got up and ran in to the garage to grab some buckets. My father followed and helped her fill and carry them. My father said, "the water needs to be put on gently, so the snow doesn't fall apart." He helped us put water all over our half constructed igloo, and told us to go inside to warm up while the water froze.

About two hours later, we went back out to finish our igloo. With my father in tow, the three of us finished it within two hours. My sister and I crawled in and just sat there in wonderment. We were proud of our creation and oblivious to the outside world around us. What felt like hours later, my father came out and handed us each a cookie and some hot cocoa.

He said, "Here is a snack. You guys deserve it." We smiled and accepted our rewards.

As darkness fell, we could no longer feel our behinds from sitting on the cold, frozen ground for so long. We crawled out of our igloo. My sister ran inside, with me right behind her. I stopped and turned around. Standing there in silence, I looked at the back yard. What started out looking like a perfectly smooth blanket of diamonds now looked as though a herd of elephants had trampled through our yard.

"Well, there is always tomorrow," I thought. What a perfect winter's day.



Adolescence

The 2008 Sextant Award Winner

Remember

By Rich Miller

Do you remember what it's like to yell?

Do you remember what it's like to scream,

Back when all that mattered were our dreams?

--Before electric bills and high interest loans,

--Before car payments and video phones,

--Before khakis and dress shirts and polyester ties,

--Before clean cut job interviews and our corporate ladder lives.

When we barely ever shaved, and it barely ever mattered,

It was garage bands and heavy metal guitar

And pretty girls thinking we were cooler than we really were.

It was Domino's pizza and video games.

--Before resumes and I-Love-Yous,

--Before down payments and credit checks,

--Before lonely apartments and dirty rims.

We walked on eggshells,

But we were really walking on air.

And now we all have to grow up.
We have to be women and men.
We have to climb up that ladder,
And if we fall off, the only option is to climb again.

We must succeed; we have to win.

But maybe success is just Domino's pizza and video games.
Maybe success is garage bands disturbing the peace.
Maybe success is simply being happy right where we are.
We may not have time for video games,
We may have too much stuff to do,
But let's make sure that tomorrow's yesterday
Is just as good as today's yesterday is too.



*Born and raised in the Chicago suburbs, **Catherine Walsh** moved to the San Francisco Bay Area on a whim and stayed for 19 years. While in Silicon Valley, Catherine experienced the rise and fall of the dot.com industry and dabbled in freelance writing. After attending seven different colleges over a 20-year-period, Catherine is happy to report she graduated from Hodges University with a bachelors degree in Interdisciplinary Studies in June 2008.*

Words Can Sting

After a recent move, only one box remained untouched--a large box of mementos filled mostly with faded pictures of friends and family from long ago. While thumbing through the photos, faces quickly came into view--some bringing a quick smile to my face, others drumming up feelings of sadness or regret.

Not all the photos had survived the many moves I'd undertaken over the past several years; somehow my 8th grade class photo had been torn in half. I placed the ripped edges together, joining the members of the class together once again, and took a moment to study the faces. Some of the names didn't come to me as easily as they used to, but then it had been over 30 years since the photographer asked us to smile and say "cheese." The funny thing was, hardly anyone was smiling. I must have looked at this oversized, color photograph 20 times over the years, and I don't remember ever noticing that before. I certainly wasn't smiling in the least bit; in fact I looked very sad, and I couldn't help but wonder why. Shouldn't it have been a happy time? The only thing standing between the graduating class and the excitement of high school was the long, hot, lazy summer where teenagers manage to sleep half the day and, for the first week or so, run around screaming Alice Cooper's famous song, "School's out for summer!"

I looked closer now, searching for clues as to why the mood was so glum. Along with the class sat the grade school principal. Not far behind me was my homeroom teacher. When I saw her bee-hive hairdo and severe clothing, it all came back to me.

Her parting words during those last days at school have stayed with me through good times and bad, from Illinois to California and back and now here they were again, greeting me at my new residence in sunny Florida.

I'd like to think that the words she uttered to students, who were finishing up the first part of their schooling and moving on to high school, would be thoughtful, motivating, perhaps inspirational words--the kind of words that someone could hold dear to them throughout their life.

This wasn't to be the case, at least not for me. I can still hear her voice in my head now, clear as day after over 30 years, and just thinking about it starts the tears again. "Cathy, by the time you're 16, you'll probably be hooked on drugs and pregnant."

How could she say such a thing? How could she? Other than getting scolded for a male classmate touching my royal blue, knee-high sock, with its lovely embroidered peach on the side, I don't remember ever giving the impression of being a "bad" girl. Even if I was, wouldn't a teacher offer help if I did indeed seem to be heading in the wrong direction?

Whatever dreams I may have had for myself then suddenly became tainted, and her words stung deeply--farther than she ever could have imagined, then lingered and finally became part of me.

I brought them along with me to relationships, to work, to college, to job interviews.... What they reminded me of again and again was that I was somehow flawed; there was something wrong with me.

Not long ago, I sat down late at night and wrote her a letter, but when I confronted it on my coffee table the next morning, I decided not to send it (what good would it do?) and tossed it out along with the tear-stained tissues piled up beside it.

The words we choose to say to the people in our lives can leave a lasting impression. I wonder if my life would have turned out differently if she had smiled and said something positive to me, something uplifting and glorious such as "Cathy, you are a wonderfully creative and artistic person. I think that you are a beautiful person inside and out, and I wish the best for you. You are going to be very successful at whatever you decide to do--all the best to you, my dear."

Actually, I kind of like that! Perhaps I'll start repeating that over and over again in my head, and rewrite this memory once and for all.

Marcio Oviedo is a Florida Park Ranger whose hobbies include fishing, kayaking, cycling and reading. His favorite book is Clive Barker's The Thief of Always.

The Reckoning

Everything went black, and then you could see the trees outside had become the sky. And then it went black, and things went back to normal. I don't remember exactly what happened next, but I will do my best to tell it.

I was driving my new 1998 red Corvette down I-75, going about a 150 mph when in my rear view mirror, I saw some lights flicker in the woods. My heart jumped a beat. I knew it was the cops; all I could think of was, "holy shit, I am going to jail!" So I did something very foolish. I pressed my foot all the way down on the gas. The car made a violent jerk, and all I could feel is my back slamming into the driver's seat. The engine was screaming, and the tall green trees on each side of the highway quickly became a blur.

Every second felt like an hour. All I could do was look at the rear view mirror, seeing if I could spot those red and blue lights. But as I waited for those lights to appear, I made a quick glance to the front. I felt as if my stomach had fallen out of my body and struck the car floor; there in front of me was an eighteen wheeler. I didn't know what to do, but with all of my effort, I turned my steering wheel. By the skin of my teeth, I dodged the eighteen-wheeler; however, going at that speed, something happened.

There was a slight dip in the highway, or that's, at least, what the police had said. I felt as if I hit a speed bump, and the vehicle seemed to just fly off the ground--like an airplane taking off for the first time. And that's when I saw the high beams of the eighteen- wheeler, as if a spotlight was on me. The light vanished within a second, but for some reason, I still saw that flash in my mind. Even when the loud crashing sound came, that flash was brighter then ever. I felt my body was being pulled from every direction. The only thing that kept me from flying out of the car was my seat belt. The first crash was the loudest,

slamming right on the roof of the car; what followed next was an orchestra of thundering sounds, filled with sirens, grinding metal, and my own silence.

I kept on going in and out of the experience as if it were a movie. It was when I had my third black out that I could see the blood and the windshield exploding. The glass seemed to fly at me like snow flakes in every direction. I felt a strange, numb feeling come from my chest as the snow flakes flew towards me.

It all seemed like a big dream to me; it happened so fast. I felt like I was drunk and had fallen asleep when I heard a faint voice asking me, "Are you okay? Can you hear me?" I opened my mouth to say something, but what came out was silence. I tried to move myself, but everything seemed lifeless and still in shock. Laying there, not able to move, I opened my eyes and saw a man, maybe in his 50's, with a long grey beard; he smiled when he looked into my eyes. "You are lucky to be alive, young man." I could see the red and blue lights approach from behind.



Sabrina Drayton loves to write poetry and short stories. In June, she graduated with a degree in Business Management. Of her time at Hodges University, Sabrina writes, "I have really enjoyed my time at Hodges. I have had fabulous teachers. There is one teacher I would like to especially thank, Dr. Nancey Wyant. You were a great instructor, mentor, and friend. Thanks for everything!"

Midnight Oil

Cruising along in my Chevy, burning the midnight oil--

Windows are down, and the radio is blasting.

A country girl hanging loose on a Saturday night--

The engine is revved up as I pass along the winding roads.

Things are just getting started, and I am just in time.



Adulthood

Prudence Pembridge is pursuing a bachelors degree in Business Administration. The mother of five children between ages of eight and twenty-one, she is originally from Michigan, but has lived in Southwest Florida since 2001.

Lesson #1- The Jeep

12.10.07

I wanted that Jeep. Girls aren't supposed to get that attached to vehicles; this was just plain silly. Now, a guy I could understand, but me? I wanted that Jeep. I didn't care if it wasn't a four-wheel drive. I didn't even care that it was used. I didn't care about the salesman's pitch... bumper to bumper extended warranty 'til 2010...blah, blah, blah... I just wanted that Jeep.

I knew from the moment we got in. When Bob found the "secret compartment" in the back that folded down those two extra seats, I was hooked! Forget the size of the engine or what secrets were held under that hood, I was imagining a time when I could say, "We have room... our car seats "SEVEN."

The test drive was the best, sitting high in that seat, the car felt secure and safe, and the best was the kids were in two rows of seats behind me. I loved that Jeep. As we zoomed back into the car lot, I knew it would be an act of God if we were going to be driving home this gem. ..Let the wheeling & dealing begin.

As we haggled with the car salesmen, I quickly saw the Jeep riding off into the sunset without me, and to my horror, I envisioned a couple with one child driving it away (They weren't even going to use the two extra seats in the back!). What a waste...I saw the shimmering silver dream quickly disappear over a hilltop and I was left sitting there, wondering why God would have even allowed me to think for a second that we even had a chance to own such a wonderful chariot.

We left the car lot Jeepless. I didn't look back. I was ticked... They could have given us more for the trade-in. That's a great car--low mileage, great condition, a good economy vehicle (I know, I know...which brings up the whole point of why do I need the Jeep anyways...but I'm not at that accepting place yet, so let me continue whining...). They could have brought the price of the Jeep down...this could have worked; all they had to do was cooperate. Why were THEY so greedy? That was my dream and they were screwing it all up. Jerks.

I knew for sure that our phone was going to ring that day or at the absolute latest...on Sunday. They were going to be sorry they hadn't made a deal with us; they were going to call and say they were willing to negotiate, and by the end of the weekend, I would be driving that Jeep. I felt it in my heart-- God wanted us to have that Jeep; otherwise, he never would have allowed me to get so attached to it.

Sunday school today... the lesson is on the Lord's Prayer...Pastor seems to be spending an awful lot of time on the part about "thy will be done." I try to reason in my head that it is God's will that I have the Jeep; after all, he wants my family to be safe. The thought enters my mind that the car I already have is well more than we need...especially when Bobby speaks up and states their family needs \$1800 to get their vehicle fixed...um, I'm feeling a little sheepish, but I'm still not quite there yet. So I quickly erase any feelings of reason and remember how that silver Jeep sparkled in the sun and the look on my kids face when we took the test drive. I really want that Jeep.

It's Sunday night. No call...No Jeep. I have argued with my mind and heart all weekend. I'm a little confused as to why this didn't work out the way I thought it would. I don't ask for much...I even thought I heard God say this weekend, "Don't worry about the Jeep, I will work it out." Well????

Monday. We wake up late. Not a good start...I'm ticked...I run the kids to the bus stop (I should be arriving in the Jeep.). I get back home to an empty house and still no Jeep. I'm angry at Bob over making the whole morning stink because we overslept, and I need to be angry at someone over the Jeep, right? I am angry over a lot of things...I am angry because I know I shouldn't be angry at anyone but myself for actually spending my entire weekend praying for a Jeep. I am angry because I am so shallow that I spent the weekend pointing out everyone else's failures while I fail miserably myself. I am angry that I never get anything I really want. I am angry that I am so unaccepting when things don't go my way. I am quickly convicted of how I treated everyone this morning because I am unhappy about my behavior and, of course, the Jeep.

I decide to get in God's Word to help me change my attitude. It does... as I begin to read how Abraham and Sarah trusted in the Lord. Sarah wanted a child so badly...the Lord said to trust in Him and it would happen...Sarah laughs. How could she laugh? I would be angry and resentful...I'm beside myself about the Jeep; how could she be so light-hearted over an empty womb? But she is, and God follows through; she has a child. What a great example. I feel so stupid...a Jeep. I feel God's presence in my heart at this moment. A question is presented to me. If you had to choose between the harmony of your family, peace between you and Bob, a life you never had full of love and forgiveness, a house full of God...or the Jeep, which do you really want? The answer is clear, the Jeep seems so ridiculous now.

God has followed through...he has worked it out...I don't need the Jeep.



Time

By Christine Scanlin-Mitchell

Obscurity hovers--relentlessly,
Threatening her cold embrace.
Tic.

Hair growing coarse,
Pale in patches-
Lines sharpen,
And creases deepen.
Tic.

Nails brittle and thick-
Brittle bones groan and creak.
Tic- toc.

Hands and heart grow
Lonely and cold.
Padding of youth,
Now empty and barren.
Tic- toc.

She reaches with her icy claws,
Stealing the soul's compassion,
Sucking life's quintessence,
And snatching much needed essence away.
Tic-toc-tic.

The clock spins--
Devouring precious hours, and even more precious days—
Thieving—my years away.
Tic- toc. Tic- toc.

The blackness
and stillness of death-
Her only gift.
Tic- toc. Tic- toc

Obscurity hovers,
Anonymity lingers,
Relentlessly.
Tic- Tic- Tic...

Michael Petruska is an artist who relocated to Fort Myers from New Jersey. He writes poetry, short stories and music and is currently recording his second album. In addition to an avid interest in digital design and binary music composition, he does freelance design in his free time.

Trite Poem #137

I've seen you before, in a thousand dreams.

I've stalked your silhouette.

I breathed you in when you breathed out.

I am finished without you.

Pull me, if you can, from this heavy dream

--Thick with imagination, longing, desire.

Wishing for something that will never be true,

I betray my intuition, my thoughts, and my intellect.

I want to attract the things that I lack--

The power, the presence, the beauty

Of a fiery lion, handsome with the wisdom

Of many lifetimes.

To transcend the world, to fly--

This is the dream of the dragon within me.

Not content to steep in this mortal coil,
He takes flight, setting fire to the night.

I brush it away and face another day
Where dreams don't matter and have no power
Over me or my thoughts.
They dissipate in a fantastic flight.



Battle Grounds

By Justin Wilhelm

Why does the ground look rusty?
The sky with a glimmer of hope,
All enshrouded with imaginary darkness, evil,
And most of all, nauseous blood.

Fear.

I will fight not with all my strength,
But with my soul as well.
Cautious yet viscous. Complexly tactical.
At least half of us will lose our sanity.
More than half, our lives.
I wonder what I'll see in my intensely morbid state.



Jennifer London is an Allied Health major, aspiring to commence Nova's Physician Assistant program in the summer of 2009. Of her poem, she writes, "I wrote this poem a little over a year ago, just before starting school. I was at a place in my life where living in the moment was all I could do to keep my head above water so to speak. Once I began to pursue my goal at Hodges, everything that seemed to be spiraling out of control came into focus. This poem means a lot to me because it made me feel so much better to 'release' all of the feelings I was bottling up at the time. I hope whoever reads it is able to give it their own special meaning."

Released

Words written, unspoken but whispered on lips

--My pen sways on paper, mocking my hips.

Flows with my thoughts, "shhh, don't say a word."

Unjustified feelings don't make me absurd.

Thoughts in my head, they can never come out,

Hiding from strangers, always lurking about.

Heartfelt hellos and tearful goodbyes,

Wanting them back, still unwilling to try.

We love, and we hate but never by name,

Walking by windows, caught in the rain.

Throwing the dice, always playing the game,

Raising the stakes, betting in vain .

Hearts used as chips, spinning around,

What we have lost can't ever be found.
Choking on silence, searching for sound,
Tied up and gagged, my heart now is bound

Screaming in darkness, silent in light,
Afraid of myself, but seeking out fights.
Shouting out madness, crying inside,
Memories evaded, pain multiplied.

Naïve as white satin, a bird in a cage.
Fists full of fury, tongue set ablaze.
Trying new things, hoping to fly,
Falling so fast, can't grasp the sky.

Drinking like fish, barking like dogs,
Soaring like eagles, filthy as hogs.
Losing my words by losing my days.
Losing my mind; it's all still a haze.

The voices remain, the faces unclear
--Huddled and jumbled, fading through years.
Swimming around, I'm chum for the sharks.
A target, they're arrows missing their mark.

You can't be let down, if you'll never let in.
The devils and angels getting under your skin.
Heros and villains, they're one and the same.
With reversible masks, who could complain?

Eyes green from tears or envy or rage.
This little bird, let out of her cage.
Unable to trust, but able to feel,
With the hurt locked within, she still cannot deal

To her old chains, she is not a slave.
Reborn and renamed, this child has been saved.
Escaped from her past, from a life lived unknown;
Freed from her sadness, awaiting her throne.

True to myself, I always will be.
Someday I'll find how I am still me.
My lessons not learned, still farther to go
--Where life will take me I never will know.

*Having grown up in New Jersey, **Janet Cruz** now lives in South Fort Myers with her fiancé, Mark, and her dog, Brando. She received a bachelors of science degree from Hodges University and is currently enrolled in the MBA program.*

Brando

Brando is unusual, he doesn't pay much attention to people, other dogs or cats. Brando is my dog but he doesn't look like most dogs; Brando is "Dogue De Bordeaux," more commonly known as a French mastiff in America. This breed's looks are deceiving; he has a wrinkled face, a coat like a deer, eyes that look like the desert at sunset and he weighs 120 lbs. You might say to yourself, "Whoa, that is a big dog!" And yes, he is. It's almost like having a roommate; he takes up a lot of space in the house and wherever you are, you can't miss him. Although he may look intimidating, his behavior is to be admired. Brando is a very quiet dog and loves to sleep anywhere--on the cold floor or in his bed, sometimes with his feet straight up in the air. At times when I see his wrinkled face and the way he lifts his brow when I talk to him, I have to remind myself that he's just a dog. Every morning I am usually the one to wake him up from his sleep. If I am in the shower, he comes in the bathroom and lies down and falls asleep until I'm finished. When I walk him every morning, he pauses to smell the grass and the flowers. It seems funny that he reminds me of my surroundings. I sometimes take for granted the trees, flowers and the grass, but my dog Brando reminds me to appreciate it every day as he does. Brando is a great dog, and I would not know what to do without him; he makes my life complete.

Maturity and Love

Untitled

By Elmita John

To seek the impossible is to maintain the opportunity of the possible.

To gain courage is to conquer all weaknesses and strengths.

To fight for respect and honor is to realize that every battle is worth fighting for.

To achieve your objectives and goals is to go beyond the norms of accomplishment and acknowledgement.

To seek happiness is when nothing can keep your spirit from running free.

To be in love is like floating on cloud nine when you are held-touched-spoken to-spoken of-kissed-caressed with passion and love.

When the other person realizes that the love is tarnished less--

When the other person realizes that the love is unforgettable--

When the other person realizes that the love is like no other--

every breath, every word spoken brings life.

From Me to You

By Nikki Jenkins

Looking into your eyes, all that I see
Are a billion emotions looking back at me.
Knowing your love and sensing my fear--
Look into my eyes, and see all my fears.

I look above and wonder how it could be
That you are the one standing next to me.
Looking at me, I know it appears
That we will be together throughout the years.

And now that we have created our own big soul,
We no longer must fill that consuming black hole.
Knowing forever that we will never spend time apart,
I open my chest and present to you my heart.

Take care of my sweet heart as I have done,
For now you have two, and now I have none.

She Waits

By Christine Scanlin-Mitchell

Heart wide open, she waits, eyes downcast.
Her lover, she desires—departed duty bound.
Crescent moon, rosewood cloud emerges vast.
A sigh—a whisper of persistent faith found.

Her lover, she desires—departed duty bound.
Passion's fire fading for a heart not so meek.
A sigh—a whisper of persistent faith found
From loneliness to solitude wound her weak.

Passion's fire fading for a heart not so meek.
Soft spoken vow heard by young dancer's ear.
From loneliness to solitude wound her weak
To a confident dream that she shall hold dear.

Soft spoken vow heard by young dancer's ear.
A wish for the future, a tear for the past.
To a confident dream that she shall hold dear.
Tears of isolation slip down mournful cheeks.

A wish for the future, a tear for the past.
Broken dreams healed by promises fast.
Tears of isolation slip down mournful cheeks.
Bravery and comfort are all that she seeks.

Broken dreams healed by promises fast.
Crescent moon, rosewood cloud emerges vast.
Bravery and comfort are all that she seeks.
Heart wide open, she waits, eyes downcast.



Sweet Love

By Sabrina Drayton

I have sweet love

--The kind of love that is rare

--A love that cannot be purchased but a love that can be shared

--An exciting love that melts your heart and soul

--A love that carries you to places unknown.

This type of love is sweet and savory.

This type of love is delightful and fulfilling

--Oh how precious to possess a sweet love.

I have sweet love

--The kind of love that is rare

--A love that cannot be purchased but a love that can be shared.

No more lonely days, no more lonely nights,

A sweet love has arrived to take me by flight.

I will fly away to a place unknown.

I am going to share a sweet love where only lovers roam.

Who said love didn't exist?

Who said this was very wrong?

For I have found a sweet love that will prove the critics wrong.

Cast away your silly doubts.

Cast away your silly fears.

A sweet love is one that is forever real.

A sweet love has arrived for all those aching hearts.

A sweet love has arrived for all those with doubts.

I have found a sweet love

--The kind of love that is rare.

My love cannot be purchased, but it will be shared.



Somewhere in Between

By Rich Miller

It's kind of like love, but it hurts so much that they know it's not.
It's kind of like pain, but it feels so good they don't want to stop.
It's peaceful and chaotic, and they're not sure what it means.
It's a smile and a broken heart, and it's somewhere in between.

She was sitting there at the bus stop, just watching the days pass by.
As he sat down, he couldn't help but see the fire in her eyes.
He asked her for a cigarette, and she told him that she didn't smoke.
He said that he didn't either, and she laughed like she'd heard a joke.
They talked about romantic things; they talked about the Son.
They talked about politics and how the race was won.
They talked about a lot of things; they talked until they cried.
They talked and kept on talking as they watched the days pass by.

She had stars inside her eyes that day; he had clouds inside his mind.
They held hands and each other and left their fears behind.
She said her name was Sunrise, and he said that she was right.
He told her that because of her, he'd finally seen the light.
They talked about romantic things; they talked about the Son.

They talked about politics and how the race was won.
They talked about a lot of things; they talked until they cried.
They talked and kept on talking as they watched the days pass by.

Suddenly she stood; she kissed his cheek and said goodbye.
He never even had a chance to know the reasons why.
She just wants to be his friend, and he just wants to cuss.
But he smiles cause he understands every Sunrise leads to dusk.
So he wipes away a single tear and stands and carries on.
And he keeps on pushing forward cause every dusk leads to a dawn.

They talked on about romantic things; they talked about the Son.
They talked about politics and how the race was won.
They talked about a lot of things; they talked until they cried.
They talked and kept on talking as they watched the days pass by.

It was kind of like love, but it hurt so much that they knew it was not.
It was kind of like pain, but it felt so good they didn't want to stop.
It was peaceful and chaotic, and they don't know what it means.
It's a smile and a broken heart, and it's somewhere in between.

Michele Short was born in Pennsylvania but grew up in Florida. After graduating from Charlotte High School, she completed Law Enforcement Academy training at the Lee County/Southwest Florida Criminal Justice Academy. Having worked as a dispatcher, road patrol officer, and DARE Instructor, she currently holds the position of detective. She wrote this poem for her spouse.

Feelings of Love

That feeling and emotion you just can't describe,

A tingle, a turn, a twist inside...

That smile you show, your face all over glows,

My melting heart still simmers,

staring into those eyes.

...The things we would say,

The times we share,

the ideas we bare,

Forever in life, if we dare.



The Turn Around

By Michael Petruska

I turn around to find you
And find you're gone again.
I see you left me hanging,
Holding the bag again.

How could you be so selfish?
Why can't you just believe
In me and you and everything
That could make you not leave.

Don't turn around;
turn around, and say you love me...
Don't turn away;
turn away, and pretend to care...
Don't turn around;
turn around, and say I'm lovely...
Just kiss my lips, and walk out the door.

I turn to myself
In the mirror on the wall.
I find myself regretting
How I could ever fall.

In love with such a fool,
A hopeless ne'er do-well--
How could I mistake
Heaven for your hell?



Virginia Young Ross is a bachelor of science student in the Management program at Hodges University. She moved to Florida in June 2003 with her daughters Adriannah, Kalia, & Talia.

YOU

What drifts tenderly throughout the depths of my heart?

What fills my soul with peace and overlooks my fault?

What brings forth this passionate desire within my being?

Our love, our desire, this trueness which I am finally seeing.

What hovers over me and shelters me throughout the day?

What thoughts calmly pace around in my head and replay?

What strokes my spirit with oneness and connection?

Our union, the strength of our bond, our lasting affection.

What will shield me from those things around the bend?

What will bring serenity from beginning to end?

What will endure through life's journeys that are ahead?

Your security, the power that is within the words we have said.

What caresses me ever so affectionately with zeal?

What brings enrapturing pleasure of which there is no fill?

What captivates entangling me in gratification I hadn't known?

Your passionate, fervent, never ending love that has been shown.

What consumes my body and takes total control?

What has pleased me and fulfilled my soul?

What has imparted vitality into my life?

My king, my friend, my companion--I am your future wife.

What sustains this impassioned love that is my inspiration?

What humbly made me thank God for His orchestration?

What has calmed and soothed my spirit unto rest?

Your loving touch, calming words, always being at your best.

What continues giving me reason to push past the rolling waves?

What motivates me to strive, to endure, to be brave?

What brings overflowing happiness I can hardly contain?

You--with untainted love-- have completed me in ways I have yet to ascertain.



My Country

By Lorena Aristizabal

I look up
And around--
Endless mountains piercing through the night.
They deceive, and they lie;
They promote what we want to hide.

My country struggles.

Our mountains harbor the ones that kill--
Those that ruin people
With such thrill.
...Contributing to the world's supply,
Never ending... the most valued high.

My country strives.

I want you to see what I see.
...The beauty of the people,
The streets filled with the colors of carnations and music,
The love for one another.

My country lives.

Object of My Affection

By Catherine Walsh

Who would have ever guessed I would have a love affair with my bathtub after all the years of neglect, inattention and just plain ignoring it--save a few cleaning spurts when it started to resemble a science experiment.

It all boils down to love. I mean what other source of power could have turned me, a self declared slob, into someone who now finds a visit to the bathroom a spiritual experience. I slowly pull back the textured glass shower door to admire the ever-so-clear reflection of the overhead light on the bright, shiny, gleaming ceramic surface. I gaze lovingly at the tub, feeling a sense of pride and accomplishment as I do so.

Don't be mistaken, this love of tub didn't come without an event surrounding it. This sudden switch, as if another personality had emerged, came as a result of meeting Ray. You see, Ray likes clean tubs. He let me know this right off the bat. One day a couple of weeks ago, Ray was visiting my apartment and after using the rest room, he stated, "Well, I know one thing for sure, we're stopping for Tilex on the way home." I replied, "Glad to hear you want to buy me something. I just never thought it would be bathroom cleanser."

Well, a challenge is a challenge, right? Ray may have figured out how to do what my parents were trying to do for years--get me to clean my room! Of course the trick, according to Ray, is to get it clean, and keep it clean. Well, let's just say that it's two weeks past the Tilex challenge and I guarantee my bathtub is the cleanest in the county!

The miracles don't stop there. I'm proud to report that my laundry is done and there are no dishes in my sink. This proves to me beyond belief that miracles do happen and where there are miracles, there is love. Some say love makes the world go round, but in my house, love makes the sponge go round.

I'm a little worried that it's getting out of control though. Red

flags went up when in addition to the daily wipe down, I also cleaned the tile grout for the second time in a week, or when one morning I hesitated to take a shower because I didn't want to get the tub dirty. What's worse is that I'm starting to relate to my sister, the neat freak. But I guess I've been kind of weird like this all along. I scolded my friend recently for putting greasy dishes in the dishwater and "getting my water dirty". Or when Ray pointed out that there were spider webs all over the outside light fixture, and it needed a little attention from the broom; I replied, "I know, but I didn't want to get my broom dirty." Huh?

Well, you know how they say being single and living alone makes you set in your ways. I guess that's why Ray is only visiting me on weekends for now, leaving me with a little too much time on my hands. He let me know that he, too, is set in his ways and proceeding with caution. That's ok; in the meantime I've got a lot of love to give, and well, me and my bathtub, we've got a lot of making up to do.

